

Author's Credibility

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

author: the person who wrote a book or an article or who created a Web page; some texts do not name an individual but only an organization

credibility: the knowledge and trustworthiness of an author

bias: an inclination for or against a particular person, group, topic, or issue

loaded words: words that show bias because of their intensely positive or negative associations

HERE'S HOW

Step 1: Look for the name of the author or authors. Get in the habit of asking who wrote a piece. If there is no name—individual or organization, credited for the work, then no one is responsible, or accountable for factual, truthful content. It may not be credible. Look in the following places for a name:

- **Book:** on the cover or title page
- **Article or periodical:** at the beginning or end of the text
- **Web site:** on the home page or “contact” page

Step 2: Examine the author's credibility. To examine **credibility** means to determine if the author has enough **knowledge** to write factually and accurately, and whether the author has **balance** or **bias**, is truthful and fair, or leans toward one belief or interest.

- **Background:** First, look for information about the author (for example, “Director, Excelsior University Museum of Art”). If you don’t see any information given with the author’s name, try a reference book, such as *Current Biography*, or try a search engine.
- **Knowledge:** As you read about an author, ask yourself: Does the author have direct experience with the topic? What are the author’s credentials—recognition and achievement such as, education, training, experiences, job title, and publishing record?
- **Bias:** As you read an author’s work, ask yourself: Does the author make direct statements or give hints about opinions, beliefs and interests? Is the author well-regarded? Does the author work for a group that advocates a certain position? Does the author use loaded words?

EXAMPLE “I believe that all students in public schools should wear uniforms.”

Step 3: Evaluate the usefulness and importance of the work. In light of the author’s credibility, ask yourself whether you should discount the piece, rely on it as a source, or get the viewpoint of another author.